1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

to the monastery. But to eat an animal so killed wittingly is a sin without remedy and which will be heavily visited in the next reincarnation.

Lamas naturally cannot kill animals nor should they eat them on the same day that they have been killed; these prohibitions, however, do not extend to the lay members of the lama's family. In a house where there are no laymen lamas will call one in to act as a butcher for them; the butcher will get as fee twelve to fourteen lbs. of meat from the crutch of an ox, smaller but similar amounts from a goat or pig, and a drink of *chi* for a chicken. Cattle are usually killed with a bow and arrow, shooting from very near; sometimes they are stoned or killed with a pointed knife. Pigs and goats are killed with a pointed knife if there is one, otherwise with a piece of sharpened bamboo. Chickens are usually knocked on the head. Boys above the age of ten can kill chickens and goats, and pigs after fifteen; but only a completely potent person will have the courage to kill an ox.

vi

With small exceptions the land and animals are considered to be the property of the householder, in whose name the house is registered and who is responsible for the payment of taxes. This householder is usually the oldest man in the prime of life in the family; a grandfather who has living sons usually gives the control in his life time over to his eldest son. In theory the property descends from elder to younger brother, and then, when all of the first generation are dead or too old, to the sons of the elder brother. In point of fact it is seldom that there is more than one family of each generation in one household; if the group becomes overlarge the sons usually set up house on their own. If a son wishes to set up on his own during his father's life time, the father assigns to him, with the consent and co-operation of the Mandal and *youmi*[9] his proportionate share of the land. If when the father is dead the sons wish to separate the property is divided by the Mandal, *youmi*, and *gyapön*. The house is given to the eldest son, the animals and movable property divided up equally; the land is also divided up equally, the eldest son having the first choice and, if there is difference in the size of the fields, the biggest fields. In the event of the number of fields not being exactly divisible by the number

[9] *Youmi* and *gyapön* are village officials: for further explanation see Chapter Five, p. 131.

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

be appointed by the Mandal; for the purpose he will choose the younger son of a large family. If there are no direct heirs the *ké-tsop* will keep the property permanently; if the heirs are infants he will hand over the property when the boy is big enough to work the land himself. In such a case during his guardianship the *ké-tsop* will be responsible for the payment of the taxes; he works the land and supports the ward, but can keep for himself any profit he can make. He receives no other fee for his services. To give an example, Ongden's eldest son was acting as *ké-tsop* to Kahlyeu; Kahlyeu, who is getting on to eighty, is too old to work the land, and his only surviving grandson Chélé is too young. I asked if there was any possibility in such a case of a *ké-tsop* trying to claim the land permanently and was told that such behaviour was absolutely unthinkable. Indeed the idea was so grotesque that it was treated as a good joke.

In the case of a childless couple the *ké-tsop* keeps the property permanently. When a rich and childless couple grow old there is occasionally a certain amount of intrigue by parents to get their child adopted by them; but this is always done indirectly and through intermediaries; it would be shameless for parents to offer their own children for adoption. A year ago an old couple died in Lingthem whose only children were two daughters who were married in other villages; during their lifetime the old people did not want to adopt a boy and struggled alone to pay their taxes and work their fields; after they died the Mandal and *youmi* decided that Pichi, the second son of Datoop, should be made *ké-tsop*. The married daughters took all the movable property and animals between them; Pichi only got the house and land, and his father had to pay for the funeral expenses of the old couple. This property now belongs to Pichi and his descendants for perpetuity; he and his younger brother and his parents have moved into this house, leaving the old house and property to Datoop's eldest married son Pembu. The houses and fields are at some distance from one another.

If the household consists of more than a single married couple and one child, the dependent members of the household usually have a little private property of their own, in the form of a few animals and small portions of rice terraces and cardamum fields. When children achieve physical independence they are given their own clothes and knife or sickle and usually a wooden cup; and usually at about the same time a baby chicken or kid or piglet.

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

422 The children look after and feed these animals a little, and will cry if they are sold. The parents however are at perfect liberty to sell them, if they wish to, without consulting the owner; the money is said to be set against the expenses incurred for the child's clothes. If on the other hand the parents kill the animals for sacrifice or food, they have to replace them, and any young the animals bear belong to the owner. Also when they are still very young children are given a tiny piece of land as their own field; at first the parents help them with their work, but by about the age of twelve the children are expected to be able to look after them by themselves. As the children grow older the size of their field is increased. The grain from the children's fields is harvested separately and kept in a special container, but the house-mother can use it for household purposes without consulting the child. The produce is stated to be set against the children's clothes and knife, and, in the case of young girls, jewels. In general the privately-
422 owned animals and grain are not set apart from the others in any
583 way; only when girls go to their husband's village they take with them their private animals and the last year's harvested grain as a sort of dowry. When a wife settles into her husband's home she is generally given small portions of rice terrace and cardamum field, from the proceeds of which she can buy jewels. In this manner everybody, even the youngest children, is given the appearance of being self-supporting, of feeding and clothing themselves by their own work.

422 It seems as though nearly everybody except the very poorest have a few private animals. Mrs. Datoop, one of the richer women in Lingthem, says that at her marriage she brought with her six or seven cattle and other animals. She now owns ten head of cattle, three rice terraces, and two cardamum fields which yield about sixteen maunds; she bought her very fine jewels with the proceeds. When her two daughters were married each took with her a pair of each sort of animal, a big copper pot, and jewels which had been bought from the proceeds of their grain and animals. Her daughter-in-law Mrs. Pembu, brought with her when she was married oxen, goats, chickens and crops; but most of these have been used for the household, and now she only claims as her own two pigs and three chickens. Her jewels are all presents from relatives. Since she and her husband are the sole owners of their property she has no private land.

Chimpet, Tafoor's oldest son, aged fourteen, owns a pig given

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

to him by his father, a black heifer called Katikmu, a present from his 'grandfather'[11] the second Dorjé Lapoon, and a tiny cardamum patch yielding half a maund, which was given to him by his mother's father, Lharibu Chujen. His twelve-year-old sister only possesses a single hen. Tempa's five-year-old daughter owns three chicks and a piglet. Only children, and the wives and children of the poorest people are the only ones not to possess any property. Land which is given as a gift can be given again as a gift provided it does not pass into the possession of people living under another Mandal; it cannot be sold without the permission of the Mandal and of the original owner.

All the land of Zongu belongs to the Maharajah and cannot be owned by anybody not of Lepcha blood. Transactions of land between residents inside Zongu need the consent of the Mandal, and if necessary the confirmation of the Court. In the event of a Lepcha from outside Zongu wishing to settle therein, he will apply to the Mandal in whose village he wishes to live, who will forward the request to Court. If the request is granted the Mandal will summon all his 'tenants' and instruct each of them to give the newcomer a strip of land; he himself will give a piece of uncleared forest. These pieces of land are really gifts; the immigrant only pays for them with a drink of *chi*. The Mandal, it is believed, will always be glad to get a new 'tenant'; the householders may dislike giving up their land, but there is nothing they can do about it. It is extremely rare for immigrants to arrive in this fashion; in the last thirty years only one such has come to Lingthem, and that was Katel, who followed home his runaway wife. Such strange men as do come to Zongu usually do so either through marriage or adoption.

vii

It is perhaps permissible to speculate a little on the historical development of the Lepchas of Zongu in regard to their food-getting habits. Primitive economies are usually divided into three

[11] Throughout this book I have put into quotation marks kinship terms when they are employed by the Lepchas in their extended meaning, in cases where they do not correspond to our classification. Thus the second Dorjé Lapoon is by our classification Chimpet's paternal grand-uncle; this actually has no corresponding term in Lepcha; and since both the two themselves and anybody else referring to them would call them 'grandfather' and 'grandson' I have consistently employed the Lepcha terminology.

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

dence will be formally recognised by its parents in a number of ways. In their earlier years children are fed from their parents' plates, the son usually eating from the mother's and the daughter from the father's. At about the age of four the child is given a plate and cup of its own, or, if it is not given a plate, will be given its food on a separate leaf to eat by itself. At the same time a child is also given its clothes and a piece of cloth; the mother gives it a small haversack which she has woven out of nettle cloth and the father gives a boy a small knife, a girl a small sickle. These articles are the absolute property of the child and he can, if he wishes, give them away. The young child is not censured if it breaks or loses the property, for it is very young, but if it persistently spoils or loses it the property is not replaced until it is older and wiser. The actual age on which the knife and sickle are given varies very considerably with the character of the child and the disposition of the parents; some children in their fourth year had already got these implements while others in their sixth year had not. Parents manifest no sort of anxiety lest their children should hurt themselves with these instruments; and I frequently saw adults lend children of five or six their own knives, which are nearly as long as a child's leg and are quite capable of killing a man. This confidence seems to be justified, for I never saw a child badly cut by a knife, though a couple of adults came to have their feet dressed after they had wounded themselves with a hatchet. The haversack plays an important part in the child's development; every morning the mother gives it some grain which it can nibble whenever it feels hungry; actual hunger seems to play very little part in the life of the Lepcha child. By the time it has got its haversack the Lepcha child has fully developed the habit of sharing and will always give some of its grain to anybody who asks for it, and indeed if it is eating will offer it without being asked. If I was talking to or playing with children of five or six they nearly always gave me a handful of popped corn or cold rice.

With this achievement of the signs of physical independence a child's conscious education begins. As far as manners are concerned the only consciously inculcated habit is that of receiving gifts with joined hands. Children have to learn to respect the bedding and sleeping places of their grandparents, but otherwise respect for older people is not verbally inculcated; children do not usually alter their behaviour in any way on account of the presence of elder people or people of importance; when they grow older